

Appendix A:

Formatting a Disk

A **disk** is a device on which you can store electronic data. Disks come in a variety of sizes and have varying storage capacities. Your computer's **hard disk**, one of its internal devices, can store large amounts of data. **Floppy disks**, on the other hand, are smaller, inexpensive, and portable. Most floppy disks that you buy today are 3½" (the diameter of the inside, circular part of the disk). Disks are sometimes called **drives**, but this term really refers to the name by which the operating system recognizes the disk (or a portion of the disk). The operating system typically assigns a drive letter to a drive (which you can reassign if you want). For example, on most computers the hard disk is identified by the drive letter "C" and the floppy drive by the drive letter "A." The amount of information a disk can hold is called its **capacity**, usually measured in megabytes (Mb). The most common floppy disk capacity is 1.44 Mb. Newer computers come with devices, such as a **Zip drive**, a new kind of disk drive made to handle **Zip disks**. These disks are portable like floppy disks, but they can contain 100 Mb, far more than regular floppy disks.

 In this appendix, you will prepare a floppy disk for use.





Windows 98

Steps 1234

Formatting a Disk

For an operating system to be able to store data on a disk, the disk must be formatted. **Formatting** prepares a disk so it can store information. Usually disks are formatted when you buy them, but if not, you can perform this function yourself using Windows 98. To complete the following steps, you need a blank disk or a disk containing data you no longer need. Do not use your Project Disk for this lesson, as all information will be erased.

Trouble?

This unit assumes that the drive that will contain your floppy disks is drive A. If not, substitute the correct drive any time you are instructed to use the 3½ Floppy (A:) drive.

Trouble?

Windows cannot format a disk if it is write-protected; therefore, you need to move the write-protect tab to continue. See Figure AP-3 to locate the write-protect tab on your disk.

QuickTip

Once a disk is formatted, you do not need to format it again. However, some people use the Quick (erase) option to quickly erase the contents of a disk rather than having to select the files and then delete them.

1. Start Windows if necessary, then place a 3½" floppy disk in drive A

2. Double-click the **My Computer icon** on the desktop

My Computer opens, as shown in Figure AP-1. This window lists all the drives and printers that you can use on your computer. Because computers have different drives, printers, programs, and so forth installed, your window will probably look different.

3. Right-click the **3½ Floppy (A:) icon**

When you click with the right mouse button, a pop-up menu of commands that apply to the item you right-clicked appears. You right-clicked a drive so the Format command is available.

4. Click **Format** on the pop-up menu

The Format dialog box opens, as shown in Figure AP-2. In this dialog box, you specify the capacity of the disk you are formatting and the kind of formatting you want to do. See Table AP-1 for a description of formatting options.

5. Click the **Full option button**, then click **Start**

Windows formats your disk. By selecting the Full option, you ensure that your computer can read the disk. After the formatting is complete, you will probably see a summary about the size of the disk; it's okay if you don't.

6. Click **Close** in the Format Results dialog box, then click **Close** in the Format dialog box

7. Click the **Close button** in the My Computer window

My Computer closes and you return to the desktop.

TABLE AP-1: Options in the Format dialog box

| option | description |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Capacity | Use to specify the amount of information your disk is made to hold |
| Quick (erase) | Use for an already-formatted disk that contains files you want to erase; it takes less time than the Full option |
| Full | Use for a new, unformatted disk; this option initializes the disk, preparing it to receive data and requiring more time to complete than the Quick option |
| Copy system files only | Use to make an already-formatted disk bootable, meaning you will be able to start your computer with it |
| Label | Use to give your disk a name to make it easier to identify later |
| Display summary when finished | Use to see information about the disk after formatting is finished, such as how much space is available on the disk |
| Copy system files | Use to format the disk and then make it bootable after formatting is complete by copying system files to it |

FIGURE AP-1: My Computer window

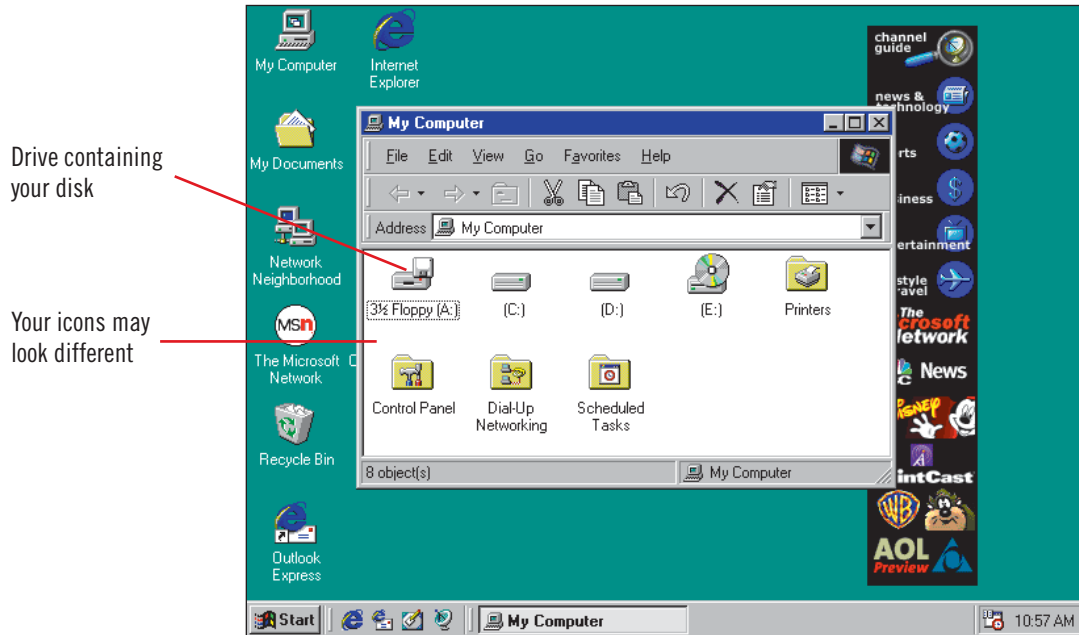


FIGURE AP-2: Format dialog box

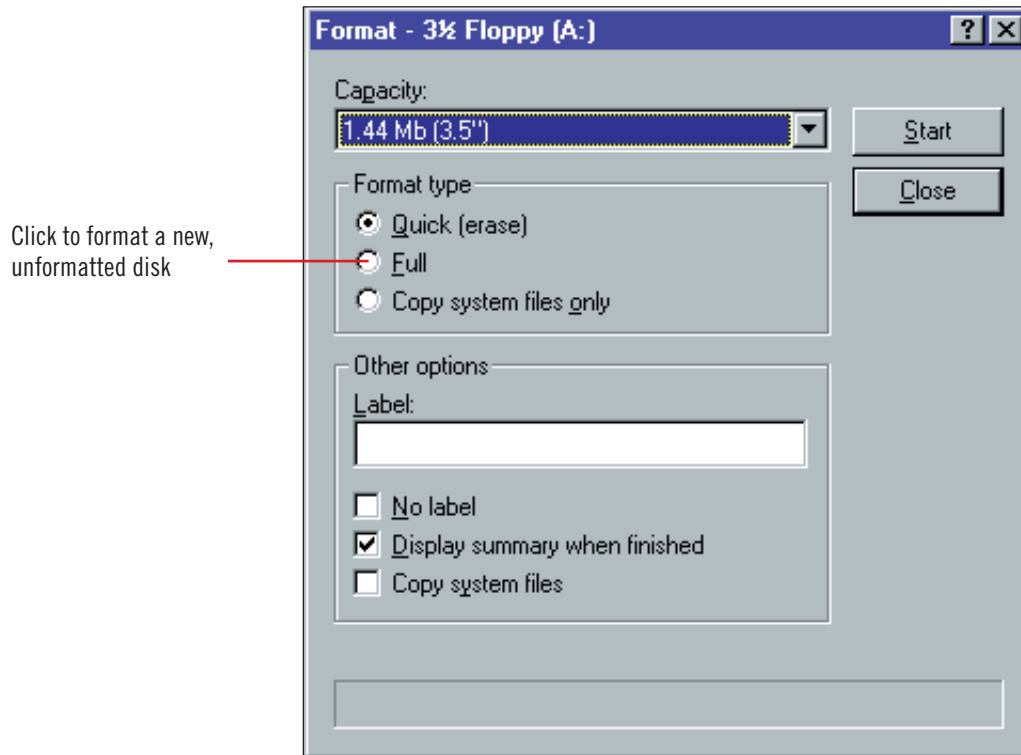


FIGURE AP-3: Write-protect tab

